

A D E C L A R A T I O N OF HIS HIGHNES

THE LORD-PROTECTOR, AND THE PARLIAMENT OF THE

Commonwealth of *ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and IRELAND*, for a Day of Solemn Fasting
and Humiliation in the *THREE NATIONS*.



Uch have been the out-goings of our God for his People in this our Generation, that none as Men, but must say, It is marvellous in our eyes; and none as Christians, but must cry out, It is the Lords doing; He hath alwayes been a ready help in time of need, and neber did his poor Serbants seek his face in vain, neither did he ever lend a deaf ear to the voice of their weepings. Who can utter the mighty Acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praises? But Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider; for in the midst of such unequalled and signal Mercies, how great hath been, and is our ingratitude and unfruitfulness: Merily such, that nothing can be greater, but that inexhausted Mercy, which hitherto hath consumed us. Should the Lord say unto us, as once he did unto Ephraim, Ephraim is joyned unto Idols, let him alone. That heavy sentence would be but our desert. As insensibility is our crime, so it might be too justly made our punishment; for who has been melted by mercies, who has been broken by judgment? Ah sinful Nation! a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward: Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. As these sad words do characterize us as fully as they did those of Juda, to whom they were first spoken; so if that sad Denuntiation should also be our Doom, we could not yet but acknowledge, The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. How deeply have we greived our good God, in not mourning as we ought, even as one that mourneth for his first-born, for that ignorance, profaneness and barrenness that is so ripe amongst us, even under such rich means of Knowledge, Reformation and Grace, in not being sensible under, nor making a sanctified use of those Rebukes we be of late received; But rather charging such miscarriages upon Instruments, chiefly, if not only, when every Individual hath helped to fill up the measure of those sins after which such Judgments were to follow.

In not improving Mercies so fully as might have been to his Glory, from whom alone they were received.

In the sad neglect and want of Activity, Resolution, and Integrity, in Magistrates, and others impowdered therein, for the punishment and suppression of Vice, and crying Enormities.

In the abominable Blasphemies vented and spread of late through the Apostasie of, and the abuse of Liberty, by many professing Religion.

In that little love and tenderness which is even amongst Professors themselves towards one another, who whilst they contend for things disputable, lose that which is certain, even Charity, which is the bond of perfectnesse, and without which they become as sounding Brasse, or a tinkling Cymball: To love one another is Christs new Commandment, nay, the very Badge of his Disciples; By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you have love one to another; in allowing difference in Forms, more power to divide Christians, than Agreements in Fundamentals hath to unite them; one of the dangerourest and fruitfullest seed that hath been sown by the Envious One.

In not being truly sensible, that though the Lord in the depths of his wisdom and righteous Judgment, hath for many years last past been overturning severall Authorities in these Nations, and hath, as it were, been pouring them out from vessel to vessel: He hath yet been pleased ever since his People publicly contended for his Truths, still to set up Rulers, who have not allowed them the free exercise and profession of them.

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In that Atheistical and Luke-warm spirit, too commonly amongst us, whereby not only the form, but power of Godliness is reproached, and accounted as a vile thing; but also too many have fallen from their first-love; and others, Laodicean-like, esteem themselves rich, and to have need of nothing, whilst indeed they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, sins which are the higher aggravated, by being committed in Countreys where the glorious Light of the Gospel shines clearest.

In being more dissatisfied that we have not obtained all we aimed at, than thankful that we have obtained so much, and through mercy we now enjoy.

All which, with other the grievous sins of these three Nations, call aloud upon all the good People in them, to lye low in the sight of our offended God, and by prayer and humiliation (a way which in our deepest distresses we have found both our duty and comfort to tread in) to seek to appease his wrath; And that he will for his own Names sake be pleased to remove whatever accursed thing there is amongst us, and that as he is our God, so we may be his People.

That he will infatuate the Counsels, and defeat the Designs of all those that labour to exalt themselves, against the Interest of his Son and his People.

That he will be pleased in a most especial manner, to vouchsafe his Presence to those who are intrusted with the management of the Affairs of these Nations:

That as he is the mighty Counsellor in himself, so also that he would appear such experimentally unto them.

That he would in all things spirit them to the work unto which they are called, And give them Unity amongst themselves, even the best Unity, that of the Spirit, in the best Bond, that of Peace; That as they are a People abounding in Mercies, so they may abound in Returns.

And that at last through the unwearied goodnesse of our God, these three Nations, after such memorable Revolutions, may be settled upon the sure foundations of Truth, Mercy and Peace, And his People henceforth, being delivered from their Enemies, may serve Him without fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before Him all the dayes of their lives.

It is therefore declared by his Highnesse the Lord Protector, and the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, That for the end and purposes aforesaid, They do appoint Thursday, being the Thirtieth day of October next, for a day of solemn Humiliation and seeking the Face of God, through the Mediation of Christ, in all Places within England, Scotland and Ireland; And do therefore hereby incite and encourage all such whose hearts God shall perswade and make sensible of their duty, and of the Commonwealths present condition, that the day, aforesaid, be set apart by them, for the purposes aforesaid. And all persons whatsoever, are hereby enjoined and required, to abstain from the works of their ordinary Calling, and from any Recreations, or other things against the fitting and due observation of that day. And all Fairs and Mercats are hereby prohibited to be kept upon that day, but may be proclaimed to be kept upon the day next ensuing. And all Officers of Justice are hereby required to cause due observation to be had hereof: And the Ministers and Preachers of the respective Parishes and Congregations, are to take notice hereof: For which end, It is Ordered, That Copies of this Declaration be Printed, and sent into the severall Parts of the three Nations, that the same may be published accordingly.

Tuesday the 23. of September, 1656.

Ordered by the Parliament, That this Declaration be forthwith Printed and Published.

HENRY SCOBELL, Clerk of the Parliament.

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